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DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ARP:AMACDONALD

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [YM](#)  
SUBJECT: SALEH PUSHES CONCESSIONS TO JMP

Classified By: Ambassador Stephen A. Seche for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

1. (C) A brief visit by National Democratic Institute Regional Director Les Campbell energized President Saleh to push his ruling GPC Party to implement concessions to the opposition. At the same time, key members of the opposition appear ready to move ahead based on six principles of agreement under discussion between the two parties. If all involved eschew raising further side issues, then an agreement to end the JMP boycott of parliamentary elections may be inching towards fruition. End Summary.

Saleh Takes Charge

2. (C) A visibly irritated President Saleh directed senior members of his staff to begin taking steps to show the opposition Joint Meeting Parties (JMP) that the ruling General People's Congress (GPC) is earnest in its intention to make concessions to persuade the JMP to participate in Parliamentary elections scheduled for April 27, according to National Democratic Institute (NDI) Country Director Heather Therrien. Saleh issued the orders during a February 18 meeting with NDI Regional Director Les Campbell in which the President also asked NDI to act as an impartial monitor of the implementation of the six principles of agreement negotiated by NDI between the two parties. (Note: The six principles of agreement are listed in para. 7. End Note.) Campbell, who was in town for a brief (36 hour) visit, told the President that the opposition's lack of trust in the GPC was so profound that the onus was on the ruling party to begin implementation.

3. (C) In an earlier meeting with the JMP, Therrien made it clear that the ruling party was not ready to discuss implementing proportional representation (a long-time JMP demand) for the Parliamentary elections. While most observers considered this understood, the JMP believed that it was still on the table. (Note: Presidential Advisor Abdulkarim al-Eryani told Therrien that he was likely responsible for the JMP's misunderstanding as he had thought the GPC leadership was still willing to discuss proportional representation. End Note.) Therrien noted that by the end of the meeting the representatives of the two largest parties in the coalition, Islah and the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP) seemed to accept the situation and be ready to move forward while the smaller parties appeared sad but resigned. When Therrien noted that the President had promised to look at the question of proportional representation after the elections "with an open mind," the opposition parties laughed with disbelief.

Amendments to the Electoral Law

4. (C) On February 21, in spite of press reports suggesting imminent action, the Parliament failed to vote on the amendments to the electoral law that are a part of the principles of agreement. When asked what had happened, Deputy Secretary General Mohamed Saeed of Islah told POL/E Chief that "discussions" between the two parties had delayed

the vote. GPC MP Nabil Basha told POL/E Chief on February 22 much the same thing.

#### Election Timing

¶5. (C) In Campbell's meeting with Saleh, the President said that while he was unwilling to call for a delay in the elections, should a newly reconstituted Supreme Commission for Elections and Referenda (SCER) call for one, he would respect it. In press reports on February 22, GPC MP Yasser al-Awadhi said that a delay in the elections would be acceptable, if its objective is to reform the political system.

#### Comment

¶6. (C) Saleh was clearly irked with his subordinates that progress on resolving the opposition boycott had not moved forward. His clear and direct orders should move his party towards implementation. At the same time the YSP's and Islah's apparent acceptance of the principles of agreement (which were originally based on their demands), and GPC willingness to accede to a face-saving delay in the elections timetable, clear the way for the JMP to respond favorably to GPC gestures of good will. The only substantial barrier that appears to remain to Parliamentary elections is intransigence in the more extreme elements of both parties. End Comment.

#### Principles of Agreement

¶7. (C) Begin Text of the Principles of Agreement.

¶1. The JMP will submit the names of seven nominees to the president of the Republic, to be appointed to the Supreme Council on Elections and Referenda (SCER). Five of the names will be selected to be members of the Council.

The Chairman of the Commission will be subject to mutual agreement between the GPC and the JMP.

¶2. An electronic, searchable, read-only copy of the electoral registry shall be delivered, at the earliest possible moment to: the Supreme Court, the Parliament and to each registered political party. A copy shall also be made available to international organizations in Yemen engaged in electoral process support.

The registry is provided for the purpose of audit and verification only. Confidentiality of personal voter information shall be maintained.

¶3. The Parliament will pass all election law amendments agreed to and described as: Amendments to Law #13, 2001.

¶4. SCER sub-commissions (supervisory, main and field commissions) shall be established according to a formula of 54% of members from the GPC and 46% of members from the JMP.

¶5. A mutually acceptable mechanism will be established by the SCER and through the adoption of by-laws authorized by cabinet to guarantee the neutrality of public funds, public servants and the state media.

¶6. Potential electoral changes/improvements that may require constitutional amendment will form the basis for a program and proposal to be put to the Parliament for debate after the 2009 election.

End Text.

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